

MINUTES: Centerville Township Windmill Ordinance Committee, November 21, 2006

Present: Molly Hyde, Carolyn Weed, Travis Nelson, Richard Light, Richard Kobetz, Mark Zemanek, David Wurm

Absent: Joseph Czerniak, Gary Cook, Dale Pleva

Steve Yanch, the Chief of Natural Resources for the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore attended tonight's meeting. He acknowledged receipt of our letter requesting information of possible effects of commercial wind turbines on the national lakeshore. The primary concerns of the NPS would be primarily visual, wildlife and soundscape impacts. It is difficult to provide specific impacts without a specific project plan. He did provide a draft of a response letter from the NPS listing concerns of the national lakeshore regarding wind energy development. Currently all 30,000 acres of the park are managed as wilderness. Some of that may change with the new general management plan. There has been no meeting to date with Ms. Schultz, the general manager of the park, to gather her opinion on the wind turbines. Mr. Kobetz commented that some homes are visible from the park and questioned the difference between homes and turbines. Mr. Yanch replied that it is a matter of scale. It will take a few weeks to get the computer's view of the visual effects of towers from points requested by Mr. Cook. Mr. Yanch also brought recommendations of the Fish and Wildlife Service. They specifically recommend that no turbines be located within three miles of a Great Lakes shoreline or within five miles of a bald eagle nest. In addition, a minimum of five miles is recommended from critical habitat of the endangered piping plover, since there are only 50 pairs of these birds and 20 of them reside within the park. Their migration patterns are difficult to monitor since there are so few. Representatives from the NPS, FWS, and the US Geological Service are meeting to determine research issues in regards to the effects of wind energy systems. Ms. Weed stated that local governments need standards recommended by the NPS and also actual protocols for studies that would be required to be conducted. Mr. Nelson said that since the NPS has concerns, and in view of the fact that determinations are not eminent, we should exercise caution. It was mentioned that the large blades of turbines rotate through two acres of sky. It is not just linear, but a question of area. Mr. Yanch commented that wind as a portion of the ecosystem. There is a question as to what happens when that chunk of wind is removed.

Discussion moved on to continue with setbacks. It was again mentioned that it doesn't have to be one piece of property to meet required setbacks if there is agreement between property owners. Mr. Kobetz brought in a large map of the township showing current conversation areas. If we were to measure a mile setback from each, there would not be much area left for locating turbines, just properties by Lavassar Road which are generally smaller parcels. A natural resources inventory would be appropriate when the master plan is next revised. Wetlands need to be identified by the township. Mr. Kobetz commented that if we were to consider a one mile conservation setback, why shouldn't we also require that same setback to protect residents also? The committee decided unanimously that a setback of five times the total height from an inhabited structure should be sufficient for safety. That would adequately take into consideration the effects

of differences in grade for tower fall down, blade throw, ice, etc. without getting complicated and computing differences in grade.

Again referring to Mr. Kobetz's map, the FWS recommended three mile setback from the Lake Michigan shoreline doesn't leave much area within the township. It was mentioned that several areas in the township that are currently designated Ducks Unlimited conservation areas and are there for the protection of waterfowl. Mr. Yanko pointed out that those areas don't have the diversity of species and habitats that are found in the national lakeshore and also don't have the national significance of the park. The committee feels we need to be on solid ground with our recommendations for this setback and need to reference appropriate standards.

The next meeting will be November 27, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,  
Molly Hyde